

CLAIMS

1. A tool for circulating fluid in a well bore, the tool comprising a tubular assembly having a through passage between an inlet and a first outlet, the inlet and first outlet being adapted for connection in a work string, a second outlet extending generally transversely of the tubular assembly; an obturating member moveable between a first position closing the second outlet and a second position permitting fluid flow through the second outlet, the obturating member including restraining means to actively retain the obturating member independently in the first and the second positions; an engagement mechanism actuatable between an engaged configuration, in which the obturating member is locked in one of the first or second positions; and a disengaged configuration in which the obturating member can move to the other of the first and second positions; a fluid pressure actuation surface coupled to the engagement mechanism and biased by a spring located between the tubular assembly and the engagement mechanism; wherein variation of fluid pressure on the actuation surface controls actuation of the engagement mechanism and stroking the tool in the disengaged configuration moves the obturating member.
2. A tool as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the obturating member comprises a sleeve axially slidable within the tubular assembly.
3. A tool as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2 wherein the restraining means is a collet.

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4. A tool as claimed in Claim 3 wherein the collet is retainable in a plurality of recesses on the tubular assembly.
5. A tool as claimed in any one of the previous claims wherein the fluid pressure actuation surface is located on an actuator sleeve axially slidable within the tubular assembly.
6. A tool as claimed in Claim 5 wherein a portion of the actuator sleeve is located across the collet.
7. A tool as claimed in any one of the previous claims wherein the engagement mechanism comprises mutually engageable formations on each of the actuator sleeve and the tubular assembly.
8. A tool as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the formations comprise a pin and a groove.
9. A tool as claimed in Claim 8 wherein the groove is continuous so that the pin can travel in a continuous cycle around the groove.
10. A tool as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the groove comprises a plurality of apexes and bases such that the pin moves longitudinally to the tubular assembly, for at least a portion of the cycle.
11. A tool as claimed in any one of the previous claims wherein the second outlet comprises a plurality of

1 ports in the tubular assembly which communicate with
2 the inlet.

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4 12. A tool as claimed in Claim 11 wherein the ports are
5 distributed circumferentially around the outer
6 surface of the tubular assembly.

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8 13. A tool as claimed in any one of the previous claims
9 wherein the cross-sectional area of the first outlet
10 is greater than the cross-sectional area of the
11 second outlet.

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13 14. A method for circulating fluid in a well bore, the
14 method comprising the steps:

15 (a) inserting a work string into the well bore, the
16 work string having a fluid inlet, a first fluid
17 outlet and a second fluid outlet, an obturating
18 member which is moveable between a first and
19 second position to respectively close and open
20 the second fluid outlet, and an engagement
21 mechanism which when engaged locks the
22 obturating member in one of the first or second
23 positions;

24 (b) varying the fluid pressure through the work
25 string to move the engagement mechanism between
26 locked and unlocked configurations; and

27 (c) stroking the work string to move the obturating
28 member between the first and second positions.

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30 15. A method as claimed in Claim 14 wherein varying the
31 fluid pressure through the work string is achieved by
32 pumping fluid through the work string.

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- 1 16. A method as claimed in Claim 15 wherein the method
2 includes the step of running the work string in a
3 closed and locked configuration with the pumps turned
4 off.
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- 6 17. A method as claimed in Claim 15 or Claim 16 wherein
7 the method includes the step of drilling with the
8 work string in a closed and locked configuration and
9 in compression while pumping fluid.
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- 11 18. A method as claimed in Claims 15 to 17 wherein the
12 method includes the step of back reaming with the
13 work string in a closed and unlocked configuration
14 and in tension while pumping fluid.
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- 16 19. A method as claimed in Claims 15 to 18 wherein the
17 method includes the step of opening the second outlet
18 with the work string in tension with the pumps off.
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- 20 20. A method as claimed in Claims 15 to 19 wherein the
21 method includes the step of stroking the work string
22 in a locked and open configuration while pumping
23 fluid.
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- 25 21. A method as claimed in Claims 15 to 20 wherein the
26 method includes the step of stroking the work string
27 in a locked and open configuration with the pumps
28 off.
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- 30 22. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 14 to 21
31 wherein the method includes operating the work string
32 in a cyclic manner through the following
33 configurations:

- 1 (a) locked closed;
- 2 (b) unlocked closed;
- 3 (c) unlocked open;
- 4 (d) locked open;
- 5 (e) unlocked open; and
- 6 (f) unlocked closed.